WOMEN'S SHARE IN THE RENAISSANCE OF BELGIUM

Tireless Industry Shown by Every Class Is Reflected in Bumper Crops, Restored Homes and Prosperous Farming and Manufacturing Centres

THIS is the fourth of a series of articles by Mrs. Borden Harriman, who is abroad studying the post-war conditions of women. The noted sociologist in the first three discussed the situation in Great Britain. Her conclusions, published in The New York Herald Magazine last Sunday, were that the outlook for the advance of English women was bright as a result of the democracy growing out of war work. To-day's analysis of the Belgian conditions is hopeful, too, but hardly as optimistic. Next Sunday Mrs. Harriman will take up the condition of women in the occupied Rhineland.

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THE proverbial suddenness with which nations overrun by warring enemies revive themselves is nowhere better illustrated than in Belgium. This small country, which produces only sufficient food to supply the needs of one-fifth of its teeming population, has achieved a remarkable degree of agricultural reconstruction.

From Ostend to Brussels the scene is one of continuous activity. The harvest season is at hand. Cereal crops have matured from three to four weeks in advance of normal years. The checkered fields of yellow grain, interspersed with blossoming clover, sugar beets and potatoes, present a rural scene of unusual charm.

Women working beside men in the harvest fields are commonly seen. The average pay is from twelve to thirteen francs a day, and the women who work on farms share in this wage. Frequently, however, the women who are employed away from the home farm are on the piecework basis. The distinction of family superiority in favor of the men still exists.

On the Sabbath day the men dress in approved style, while the women remain in their working clothes, and stand ready to wait upon their masters.

There are many evidences, nevertheless, that the women of Belgium, like those of all the world, are striving toward better things. Not the least among these is the establishment of a college for home making and farming exclusively for women. The idealism of the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Paul de Vuyst, has taken practical form in this excellent institution.

Place Run Without Servants, Students Doing All the Work

Situated on an old estate near the royal palace of Laeken, it offers every inducement in the way of a happy and aesthetic environment. The principal, Mr. Lindermans, who has studied at Amherst College in the United States, takes great pride in the fact that at Laeken they run a servantless house. The students, to train them for emergencies as housewives, learn through practical experience to do every branch of domestic work.

Through gardening, cattle breeding, dairy work, cheese making and poultry raising the girls are increasing their love of the soil and being fitted to be farmers' wives and teachers in rural communities. The only qualification in the praise of the college by those who believe in woman's rights as distinguished from woman's privileges is that it is an institution for women entirely run by men.

In the last six months the women have won the right to vote in the communal elections throughout Belgium, and they will not cease their struggle until they have also achieved the provincial and legislative franchises—these three classes of suffrage roughly corresponding to our municipal, State and national.

Mme. Brigode, suffrage leader in Belgium, worked quietly and tenaciously for years before the movement was recognized by many people. She now has her reward in having been elected to the position in her commune of Echevin of Public Instructions, or head of the school board—being the first woman to occupy an administrative official position in this country!

It is a privilege to see Mme. Brigode in her home. Pioneer as she has been for women's rights, no more lovely example of a mother and homemaker could be found. Surrounded by their sons and daughters, she and her husband lead vivid discussion on all the varied aspects of Belgian politics.

Both sons served throughout the war, and the daughters are being brought up with so much interest and part in public matters that they will doubtless become as important to the community as is their mother.

It appears that the extension of communal suffrage to women here created a paradoxical situation among the established political parties. The majority of the female population belong to the Roman Catholic Church. The clerical—or Catholic and reactionary—party, thinking that the women's vote would be at their command, were in favor of their enfranchisement. The two progressive parties, on the same assumption, voted against the women.

To the surprise of all three parties, the women's vote, cast for the first time at the last communal elections, was progressive. The liberal party, which expected to be crushed, lost little ground, and, while the clericals gained some advantage, it was by no means a great one. The socialists polled the lowest number of votes.

The intelligent women tell us that the most acute problem to-day is the disaffection between the Flemish and the Walloon divisions of the population.

Some people term Flanders the Ireland of Belgium. The Flemish—or Flamands—speak one of the many varieties of the old Saxon tongue, while the Walloons, as did their forefathers, speak an ancient dialect of French. These two races have lived here, in the "Low Countries," for centuries, but it served the purpose of the German invaders, with the idea of *divide et impera*, to stimulate their differences and antagonisms. As a legacy from the invasion there is at present a serious friction between these two factions in the body politic.

Question of Language Bitter; Flemings Opposing Use of French

Most of their discord centres around the question of language. The official tongue of Belgium is French. It is also the language of the universities, and to this the Flemish are opposed. They claim that it deprives them of self-expression and retards their progress as a race.

The Germans, to foster this feeling, inaugurated a Flemish university shortly before the end of the war, but the project came to nothing with their withdrawal from the country. The women are about equally divided with the men in this controversy.

The war, however, left one good legacy. It taught a portion of the women to do organized work in contrast to the old methods of the Lady Bountiful. From France, where the Government had asked the American Y. W. C. A. to establish centres for the munition workers, Belgium learned of its activities, and after the armistice the Y. W. C. A. was invited to come here and start their work.

There are now four of their centres in Belgium, and the work has a novel relation to the Belgians scarcely comprehensible for the more advanced women of England and America. It is practically a pioneer. Until the armistice an independent organization for welfare work among women was almost unknown, and there is a great spirit of gratitude to the American Y. W. C. A. workers who inaugurated this movement.

The secretary of the centre in Brussels is a young woman of the leisure class, whose father owns large concessions in the Congo. Her life before the war was the secluded and limited existence of the Belgian woman of her kind. She laughingly told us, to illustrate the atmosphere from which she had broken away, that when she went out unattended from her father's house to post a letter to her sister at the office just across the narrow street she was severely lectured by her family for having committed a serious indiscretion.

It is against such traditional restrictions as this that the Belgian women have made all their advances of the last few years, struggling not only against long established customs and prejudices but against the inertia of the women themselves. They were bound by long habitude into an inferior position, both in social and in political life. This struggle has been all the more difficult because the war did not open the immense field of work for women that it did in other countries. In the complete upsetting of normal conditions of an invaded and prostrate nation there was no work even for the men. There could, therefore, be no coordinated effort or organization among the women under such circumstances.

Hope to Finish Rebuilding Some Time Within Next Five Years

The devastated area of Flanders embraces a territory of 120,000 hectares (300,000 acres); of this area 112,000 hectares (280,000 acres) has already been reclaimed for agricultural purposes.

The Ministry of Agriculture estimates that the total process of soil reclamation will have been completed in the year 1922. The traveller through Flanders is torn between two conflicting emotions; on the one hand there rises before him the scarred trees, the gaunt ruins of homes, churches and public buildings, and, on the other hand, there appears the marvellous and heroic achievement of reconstruction. In the section surrounding Ypres both extremes are visible. Here destruction reached its maximum, and here rebuilding proceeds on a magnificent scale.

The procedure of reconstruction is from soil to homes, and lastly to churches and public buildings. All of the villages follow designs presented by the Reconstruction Council, and the architectural effects present pictures of unity as well as beauty. It is hoped that permanent homes will be supplied for all by the year 1924; public buildings will probably not be completed before 1926. The owners of private buildings may choose between individual initiative or governmental initiative in rebuilding. In either case the costs are borne by the Government.

The "School on Wheels," instituted by the Ministry of Agriculture, travels from village to village, giving instruction in homemaking, agriculture, dairying, home and child hygiene, cooking and sewing.

This novel venture of post-war family rehabilitation reveals once more the channels of service which have made their appeal to women who "found themselves" during the war. One of the women teachers in the "School on Wheels" received five decorations for valor as a war nurse; she now devotes all of her time to the teaching of girls and mothers in the devastated areas.

No one can appreciate what such instruction means to these families so ruthlessly torn from their homes and obliged to return to elemental ways of living. For them life had to begin anew. Deep in their hearts they cherished the small bits of soil where once stood their homes. When peace came and they were once more permitted to return to their native villages they persisted in living on the old sites. Many of the temporary shacks stand on the very ruins of former homes. The tie which binds the Flemish family to its soil is one of unyielding sentiment and devotion.

Here and there one meets with dramatic situations. One mother, for example, found herself left completely alone upon her return to her village. Her three sons had been taken as her toll of the war. Undaunted, she proceeded to build for herself a shack and to prepare her bit of soil for cultivation. She presents a solitary but courageous bit of Flemish character. On the mantel of her present "home" stands the shell which she believes killed her youngest son. She displays this to her visitors as if to indicate that this gruesome article is all that she has left of family memories.

Amid all this practical awakening the romance of the little towns of Flanders is still vivid to-day, notwithstanding the desecration of their soil by the foot of the invader.

In the *paye monastique* of the poets is situated Louvain, once called the citadel of Flemish piety. Seven years ago to-day the gray armies of the German came sweeping down upon her, leaving fire and ruin in their path. The only building of any importance that was undemolished was that jewel of great price standing in the Grand Place, the Hotel de Ville. In its richness of carved stone it contrasts sharply with the desolation about it.

But the sensation of sadness created by the scars left as memories of the enemy is quickly dispersed by the signs of energy and rehabilitation at hand. It is very impressive how the genius of the Belgian people is being incorporated in their material construction.

To replace the library of the famous university in Louvain the Carnegie Foundation is giving a building designed by an American architect, Whitney Warren. Its cornerstone was laid recently, and the flags of the Allies are still triumphantly flying from its scaffolding.

Linking together these little towns—jewels in the crown of Belgium—is the golden countryside. Here may be studied the fascinating drama of the lacemakers. As with the folksongs, the secrets of the beautiful designs were passed from mother to child for generations—each region guarding jealously the way they interpreted a pattern. A picturesque feature was the singing or chanting by these women of the country songs as they worked.

Not long ago a woman of ninety years was discovered who had the secret of how to work out the most lovely design to be found in Belgian lace. With difficulty she was prevailed upon, for the sake of patriotism, to teach three young girls how to interpret her design, and they in turn have signed a paper each promising to teach three more girls—thus insuring that the secret shall not be buried with the ancient *piceuse*—the woman who decides how many threads shall be used in a given design and where to place the needle.

To an American woman married to a Belgian—Mme. de Beurghen—is due great credit for keeping the lacemaking industry alive during the years of occupation. Fifty thousand women were furnished frames and bobbins and given work to save them from starving. Her organization, "Les Amies de la Dentelle," has established schools and is making an effort to keep the art as pure as it was before the twentieth century. Less beautiful designs had crept in, through an attempt at commercialization. By bringing the buyer into direct contact with the schools "Les Amies de la Dentelle" are hoping eventually to eliminate the middleman.

Deadly Terror Over the Country Compels Army of 100,000

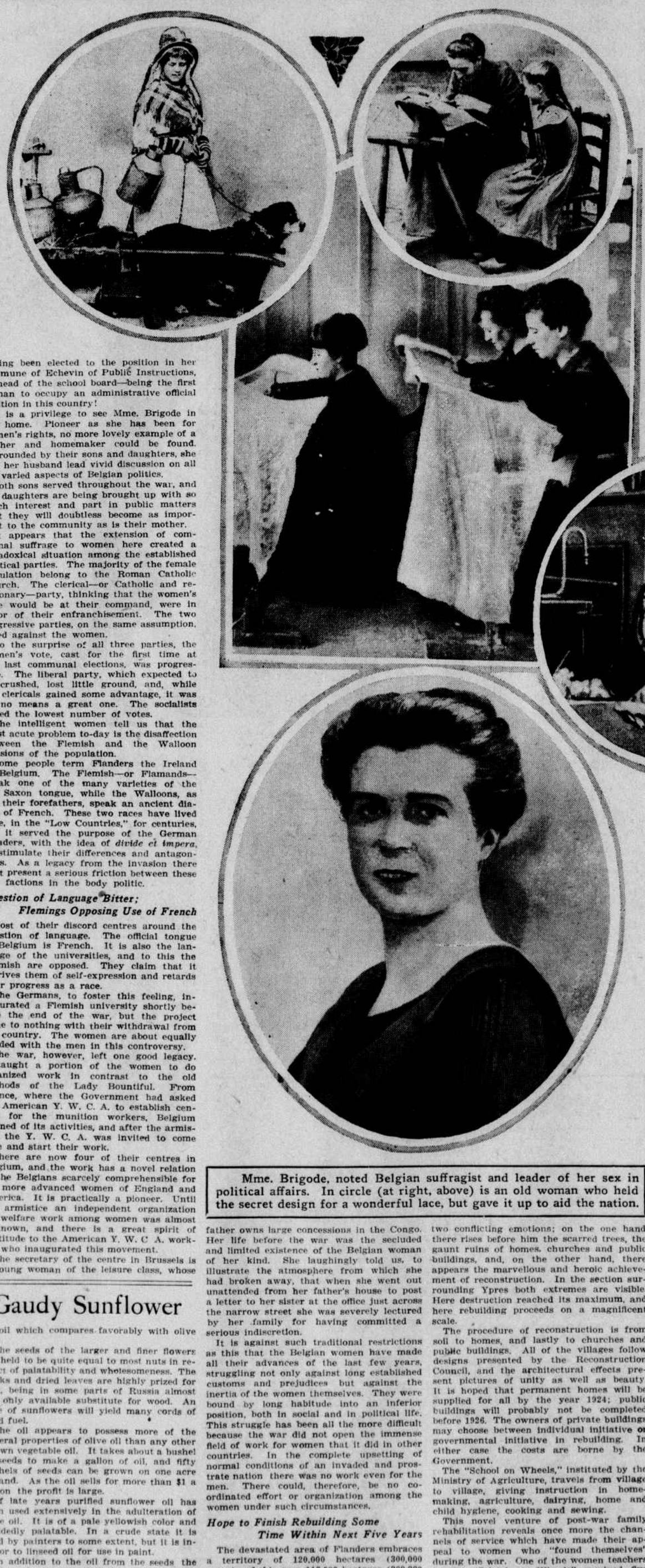
With the bright threads of art and tradition that have come down the centuries in Belgium has been woven a leaden skein. A deadly terror that clutched at the hearts of their fathers has been transmitted to the sons. Scarcely a rural family but goes to bed at night with the fear that the Germans may be again at their doors in the morning.

To this may be credited the army of 100,000 men, while the country carries its load of debt. Ask the average Belgian to-day about disarmament and the reply will be the equivalent, in their tongue, for "preposterous."

In this crowded corner of the earth, filled with age-old jealousies and hatreds and only recently laid low by ruthless force, there can be but little sentiment for doing away with what seems to them to be their only sure protection.

It is the great nations that are strong in isolation that must some day contrive to lift this nightmare of armed antagonism from the world.

How women young and old are helping in the reconstruction of Belgium. At left is a Flemish market woman and the dog that draws her produce. At right, a little girl being taught lacemaking. In the centre is a lacemaking group in a reestablished factory.



Mme. Brigode, noted Belgian suffragist and leader of her sex in political affairs. In circle (at right, above) is an old woman who held the secret design for a wonderful lace, but gave it up to aid the nation.

Enfranchisement of Sex Works Out Far Differently Than Politicians Imagined and Women Are Taking Serious View of Their Duty

Woman Now Invading Stock Brokerage Field

A WOMAN in Wall Street! The last feminine ramparts are down! I looked upon Kathleen Taylor with awe and admiration. Mathematics and finance seem to the common or garden variety of women something like Choctaw or hieroglyphics. Yet here was one who juggled with the fate of hundreds of clients, and daily beared or bulled the market or did some menagerie stunt wholly incomprehensible to the writer.

From teaching the young idea how to shoot, in an elegant estate up the Hudson, to operating in Wall Street is a far jump.

She was born in America, even in our exclusive Gramercy Park, but all the traditions of English aristocracy encompassed her, including private tutors, with never a public school. Then there were skating and other outdoor sports, which she afterward taught, along with French and German, to the favored darlings of rich folks in a castle up the Hudson. Mathematics, too, of course, even if that were "a bit unmaidenly."

She has a fine, strong face, straight bobbed hair and a humorous smile. Decidedly feminine is her humanitarian desire to put some kindness into the soulless game and to educate women so that they are voluntary investors, not ignorant dupes.

"Teaching was the only occupation of any importance open to women until recently," she told me. "And even now it has its points. There is something rather big and fine about imparting information. I am a pioneer in Wall Street, opening up the path for my sisters, largely because I found how helpless they were in the world of finance.

"Suffrage had an intellectual appeal for me and was a cause for fairness, but the old, timid methods of obtaining the vote left me cold. It was when the Englishwomen forced the issue upon Parliament and in Washington the militants insisted on consisteney in our democracy that I became intensely interested and went West as an organizer.

"But the franchise is not all sufficient. Women need freedom in industry. Jobs for women are quite as important as votes for women—economic opportunity. The field of finance is the one big field, beside which the unorganized, timid professional worker has little opportunity to amass a competence. This held a peculiar fascination for me and I determined to storm the doors of Wall Street for my sex.

"Strangely enough, even since so many women have owned and operated large fortunes the Stock Exchange has not wanted them. There are plenty of sharks looking for their money, and bewildered, many of these women have gone into wildcat schemes. But the substantial brokers hold a fixed idea that women are bad losers, not good sports, will be fussy and notionate, and so they have not made a bid for their accounts until recently.

"There are several women in New York's bond houses, notably Miss Alice Carpenter and Mrs. Jacob Riis, but I guess I am the only living woman stock broker in captivity. The Stock Exchange is man's last stronghold throughout the world. My ambition is to buy a seat on 'Change, or rather to try, for no woman can. It would be a test case which is most desirable and might revolutionize woman's world."

It seems that as the psychological moment when Miss Taylor was yearning for a financial world to conquer an old conservative firm of brokers sent for her. When it seemed feasible that she should begin as a clerk or minor broker the question of salary was broached.

"What do you want?" said the venerable man who was to make the new experiment.

"What do the young men usually begin at?"

"Why, while they are learning we generally give them $35 a week. How would $25 suit you?"

"The deal is off," replied the young woman. "If I am to underbid a man I will not go into the game. I'd be willing to work for $5 if necessary—money is of no importance while I learn—but to receive less than a chap who brings to you no superior qualifications, just because I am a woman, is impossible."

The old man capitulated, and the first feminine broker became a reality.

Of course I yearned to see the ticker in the act of ticking. On the stage one sees a corpulent man, red with approaching apoplexy, bending feverishly over the little tape and falling in a fit when his stock goes down. Such scenes may take place in real life, but I saw none.

New York women won't go down to Wall Street to invest—they force Wall Street to come to them! "Too busy!" they exclaim. "And it's too inaccessible and dirty downtown. Come on up to the fashionable shopping district, where we have to be, anyway, and then it will be convenient for us and we will look into your propositions!"

So, the firm that Miss Taylor is with (as well as some of the bond houses) has actually established women's headquarters at Forty-second street and Fifth avenue.

It was thence we repaired after luncheon in order that I might see the ticker. We ascended an elevator with nice gilt grillwork that looked very plutocratic, and passed the blackboard, where men were scanning chalked figures and on into the "woman's department." There was one middle aged client, who transacted her business quickly and quietly, and at the ticker was a handsome, black eyed, young woman fingering the tape, who, I learned, was a structural engineer, recently graduated from Cornell. Nearby, in an office, she designs skyscrapers.

Many Uses for the Gaudy Sunflower

THE sunflower, although it originated in this country, in the great plains, is not used here so extensively as in some other countries, especially Russia in normal times. It is a long time since the plant first delighted the eyes of Europeans, being then cultivated in the gardens of Madrid. The early Spanish explorers had found it in this country and taken it home with them.

The plant was utilized by the American Indians long before the days of Columbus. When Champlain visited the Georgian Bay in 1615 he found the natives growing it and using the oil for their hair. It was raised chiefly, however, for the food afforded by the seeds.

In Russia the seeds have always been eaten in immense quantities, raw or roasted, as peanuts are in this country, and the oil obtained by pressing the seeds is an important article of diet. The frequent religious fast days in that country restrict the use of meat and lead to the consumption of vegetable oil, and in normal times the manufacture of sunflower oil is always of considerable dimensions. The best seeds yield an oil which compares favorably with olive oil.

The seeds of the larger and finer flowers are held to be quite equal to most nuts in respect of palatability and wholesomeness. The stalks and dried leaves are highly prized for fuel, being in some parts of Russia almost the only available substitute for wood. An acre of sunflowers will yield many cords of good fuel.

The oil appears to possess more of the general properties of olive oil than any other known vegetable oil. It takes about a bushel of seeds to make a gallon of oil, and fifty bushels of seeds can be grown on one acre of land. As the oil sells for more than $1 a gallon the profit is large.

Of late years purified sunflower oil has been used extensively in the adulteration of olive oil. It is of a pale yellowish color and decidedly palatable. In a crude state it is used by painters to some extent, but it is inferior to linseed oil for use in paint.

In addition to the oil from the seeds the stalks, when green, and the oil cake make excellent fodder. The fibre of the stalks, which is fine, silky and very strong, also has a value. In China it is woven into beautiful fabrics and it is believed that by the use of proper machinery it might be utilized most profitably in the United States.